Divis Bulletins
Vol. 1, No. 1
1953

PICTURESCOPE

Newsletter of the
PICTURE DIVISION
Special Libraries Association
Volume 1 #1 1953

SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION
ARCHIVES COPY

Aims of the Picture Division:

To provide a channel for the exchange and pooling of ideas and information on pictures, on sources of picture material, on the organization, use, and handling of such material, as well as the broader aspects of picture research.

Division newsletter

This PICTURESCOPE is to be presented as a means of circulating information about pictures among members. Coming issues will include descriptions of little-known collections, picture indexes, items of personal interest, letters from members, wants and suggestions.

Mrs. Minna H. Breuer has agreed to serve as editor.

Editorially speaking

It is fitting that the first issue of Picturescope define the aims and the purposes of the new Picture Division. There has long been a definite need for a national organization of people working with picture materials, for an open forum where the special problems of picture collection organization and use can be discussed, for the initiation of joint action on many needed projects.

The small committee, the "founding fathers" who met in Baltimore last February were dissatisfied with the lack of general criteria in this field, the paucity of material in print on the subject, the absence of pooled information and ideas about pictures (particularly for documentary purposes) and picture research. Later meetings reinforced these opinions and the conclusion was that the time for the professionalization of picture research and for the formal organization of picture librarians had come.

Steps taken to implement this conclusion are described in these pages. We invite all workers with pictures who share these aims, who are interested in the projects outlined in this newsletter, who are seeking a channel for the expression of ideas and the exchange of information in the field of pictures to get in touch with Franziska Gay Schacht, Picture Collection, The New York Public Library, Fifth Avenue & 42nd Street, New York 18, N. Y.

M. H. B.

Meetings

On Tuesday, October 28th, 1952, at the first meeting of the Picture Division (held at The New York Public Library) aims were defined and projects outlined. Temporary officers were chosen:

Chairman: Romana Javitz, Picture Collection, The N.Y. Public Library
Vice-Chairman: Elsie Phillips, Picture Collection, Enoch Pratt Free Library
Secretary-Treasurer: J.E. Molloy, Librarian, Philadelphia Inquirer
Recording Secretary: Herbert J. Schwarz, Jr., Asia Institute

First national meeting

The first national meeting of eastern seaboard members of the Picture Division was held in the Conference Room of the National Archives Building, Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, January 13, 1953.

En route to Washington, the New York group were guests of the Librarian of the Philadelphia Inquirer, J. E. Molloy, and were introduced to the picture morgue and reference library. The photograph files include the collections of Click magazine, Screen Guide and Globe Photos. Mr. John Miller, Picture Editor of the Inquirer's Sunday Magazine, gave a talk about his personal picture index to 19th century periodicals. He has devotedly recorded the subject content of illustrations in complete runs of these magazines. This index belongs to Mr. Miller and he brought part of it to the library of the Inquirer for the Picture Division members to study at first hand. There are more than 20 000 index cards in detailed subject analysis of the pictorial content of the magazines.

Herbert C. Kluge, Librarian of the Medical Illustrations Service, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Chairman of the Washington group, presided at the evening meeting. Twenty-five persons attended, representing federal and public libraries, archives, newspapers and museums in Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia and Washington, D. C. Welcoming the out-of-town members, Mr. Kluge reviewed the history of the Washington group and its earlier form as the Association of Federal Photographic Librarians. He described the preparation of The Guide to Still Photograph Collections in Washington, D. C. The work of compilation and editing was a group project under the chairmanship of Miss Jacqueline Cobb, Chief, Still Pictures Section, Audio-Visual Records Branch, the National Archives. Mr. Kluge gave a copy of the Guide to the New York group for the purpose of exploring the possibility of publication by the Special Libraries Association.

Dr. Dallas D. Irvine, Chief of War Records Branch, National Archives, and Vice-Chairman of the Washington group, suggested that there should be a multiple approach to the problems of picture handling and classification. As an archivist, he said he favored keeping in one package groups of pictures that might lose their significance if each picture were classified and interfiled in a large collection. Miss Javitz pointed out that the use of pictures should dictate their handling and invited Dr. Irvine to write an article on the archivist's point of view on relationships within the parts of a pictorial collection, and what librarians should know about the archives aspect of pictures.

Speaking for the national membership, Mr. Molloy read the stated aims and the projected program. The discussion that followed underscored the need for implementation of these aims in regard to wider circulation of information about existing collections, the practical problems of handling pictures and the training of picture librarians.

Projects

INDEX

A recurrent need in the field of pictures is a union index of collections with specialties indicated. A card questionnaire was designed and printed and is ready for mailing. A letter explaining the purpose of the card will accompany it. The American Association for State and Local History has been sounded out for a cooperative venture that would bring this questionnaire to its members. As

planned this questionnaire should reach into and bring to light, in one accessible format, information on pictures in business, industry and educational institutions as well as collections in private hands.

By welcome coincidence, fellow member Betty Hale, organizer of the picture files of the Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, is in charge of the revision of the New York Special Libraries Directory. Picture files in the libraries covered by the directory will be indicated in the listing and fuller information will be added to the projected union index.

METHODS

The literature in the picture field is confined mainly to a scanty list of titles in pictorial journalism with only a handful of articles on methods. Among the needs discussed the most frequently mentioned was for a manual on the physical handling of still pictures. An authoritative guide to classification from the subject approach should be established; existing techniques of cataloging and storing pictures should be appraised, criteria established and, where desirable, standardization recommended. Also needed is a listing and definition of terminology used in work with pictures.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Interest was expressed in the preparation of a list of books that feature picture content from the subject point of view. This was suggested as providing sources for pictures other than those in picture files. In the beginning this project could be limited to one century, subject or language and expand as the work proves useful.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Future action on coding copyright and other legal restrictions affecting the use of pictures; a campaign to revise current practises in the matter of picture credit lines; and the preparation of a chart of procedures to be followed in ordering pictures from special collections.

Comments are invited and if you are willing to take part in these activities, please write to Celestine Gilligan, Photo-Librarian, Pan-American World Airways, 28-19 Bridge Plaza Drive North, Long Island City 1, N. Y.

Convention news

The organization of small and large picture collections is the theme of a workshop session open to the entire membership as part of the Annual Convention of the Special Libraries Association, June 22 - 25 at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto. Mrs. C. Lucile Green, Art Department, Washington, D.C. Public Library will serve as chairman of the Picture Division program. She will have the assistance of Miss Gilligan as coordinator and Miss Elspeth P. Smith as the Toronto representative to handle details there.

Another organization

Paul Vanderbilt of the Library of Congress advises us of the formation on September 10th, 1952 of the Graphic History Society of America, with himself as temporary chairman of the organizing committee. Members would be "persons interested in collecting and publishing pictures relating to particular subjects." Purposes would be to promote the collecting of pictures, exhibits of an iconographic nature, to further the use of iconographic material.....

This is all to the good in the promotion of documentary pictures and we hasten to congratulate Mr. Vanderbilt on the launching of an important project in the picture field. The distinction to be drawn between the Graphic History Society and SLA's Picture Division seems to be primarily between the approach of the antiquarian, collector, picture editor and that of the librarian handling and organizing pictures for immediate and/or long-term use without consideration of whether the pictures are old, new, rare or otherwise.

For more information on this new society write to Mr. Vanderbilt, P.O. Box # 4402, Washington, D. C.

Wants

Do you know of any portraits by James J. Audubon? Information being sought by Mrs. Monica de la Salle, Librarian, National Audubon Society, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, N.Y.

If you find mention of "no picture or likeness of ---- is known to exist" please send note of the reference to Miss Marion Wiethorn, 12 Henry Street, Huntington Station, New York. Miss Wiethorn is collecting these for publication in this newsletter.

Rara avis

At the Frick Art Reference Library in New York City, an index identifies the species of the birds represented in famous works of art.

* * * *
* * * *

Correspondence is earnestly invited.
Please send items to

J. E. Molloy, Librarian
Philadelphia Inquirer
Philadelphia 1, Penn.

Divisions - Picture

The first meeting anywhere of the new Picture Division of Special Libraries Association was held October 28 in The New York Public Library. Present were the pro tem officers and local members of the division.

Pro tem officers are Miss Romana Javitz, The New York Public Library, chairman; Miss Elsie A. Phillips, Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore, vice-chairman; J. E. Molloy, Philadelphia Inquirer, secretary-treasurer; and Herbert J. Schwarz, Jr., The Asia Institute, recording secretary.

Agreed upon at the meeting was a statement of aims and functions of the new division, which has been been organized as a channel for the exchange and pooling of ideas and information on pictures, their source, organization, handling and use, as well more general aspects of the subject, such as the history of picture collecting.

Of the many special projects discussed for its future program, the division took steps to inaugurate two at once - a bulletin, of however modest appearance, to circulate information contributed by members; and a directory of American picture collections. Forms for the directory are being drawn up now and will be distributed shortly. Information and news notes for the bulletin should be sent to J. E. Molloy, Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia 1, Pa.

All persons interested in the documentary use of still pictures are invited to join the new division and participate in its activities. Information can be obtained from Miss Franziska Gay Schacht, Picture Collection, The New York Public Library.

Another meeting of the division is scheduled for December 2, at 5;30 P.M., in the Picture Collection room of The New York Public Library.